

MINUTES

**MONTANA SENATE
56th LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION**

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Call to Order: By **VICE CHAIRMAN BILL GLASER**, on March 22, 1999
at 3:15 P.M., in Room 402 Capitol.

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Sen. Bill Glaser, Vice Chairman (R)
Sen. Jon Ellingson (D)
Sen. Alvin Ellis (R)
Sen. John Hertel (R)
Sen. Bob Keenan (R)
Sen. Debbie Shea (D)
Sen. Mike Sprague (R)
Sen. Spook Stang (D)
Sen. Mignon Waterman (D)
Sen. Jack Wells (R)

Members Excused: Sen. Daryl Toews, Chairman (R)

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Eddye McClure, Legislative Branch
Janice Soft, Committee Secretary

Please Note: These are summary minutes. Testimony and
discussion are paraphrased and condensed.

Committee Business Summary:

Hearing(s) & Date(s) Posted: SJR 16, 3/19/1999
Executive Action: SJR 16 DO PASS
Discussion: HB 584

In the absence of **CHAIRMAN DARYL TOEWS, VICE CHAIRMAN BILL GLASER**
chaired the meeting.

HEARING ON SJR 16

Sponsor: SEN. KEN MILLER, SD 11, Laurel

Proponents: **Jake Ankeny, Associated Students, MSU-Bozeman & MSU-Northern**
 Ben Darrow, Associated Students, University of
 Montana, Montana Tech and Western
 Montana College
 Colin Stephens, Associated Students, MSU-Billings
 Dick Crofts, Commissioner of Higher Education

Opponents: None

Opening Statement by Sponsor:

SEN. KEN MILLER, SD 11, Laurel, said he was a member of the Education Subcommittee on Finance and Claims and he felt there was room for improvement on the funding for higher education. The resolution called for an interim committee to look at other options. Different research was being conducted around the states and interesting information had been found, which the interim committee would be able to use. He said the last study had been conducted 10 years ago; however, changes, such as lump-sum funding and restructuring of the university system, had occurred during that time. He suggested neither taxpayers nor university personnel or students were happy; therefore, there was room for improvement. It was his intent all the ideas be considered by the interim committee, which would bring proposals to the 57th Legislature.

Proponents' Testimony:

Jake Ankeny, Associated Students, MSU-Bozeman & MSU-Northern, said they supported the resolution for the reasons pointed out by **SEN. MILLER.** He maintained they had no problem with the present system, though there were many interested parties involved. If there was a better way, they hoped the interim committee would find it. Cost savings from a more efficient system could be passed down to the taxpayers and students, increasing awareness of students' needs and having better information available for the legislature to make its decisions would be benefits derived from the interim committee.

Ben Darrow, Associated Students, Montana Tech, University of Montana and Western Montana College, said they supported **SJR 16** but had some concerns. They felt there were Constitutional issues with the voucher system; however, studying the student funding issue was very important because the state's contribution would be very evident. That information could be useful in comparing the past with the present. He expressed concern about the representation on the committee and felt the language should be clarified, because it was his opinion the membership should be

composed of legislators, student representatives, regents and administration. Savings have resulted from the restructuring of the university system, but he did not know if they had been passed on to the taxpayers and students. A look at the rising cost of tuition would reveal it had gone up 100% in the past 10 years and 519% in the past 20 years. Property taxes had risen 194% in the same time period. He asked for a DO PASS from the Committee so the interim committee could make education more affordable while increasing its quality.

Colin Stephens, Associated Students, MSU-Billings, said they supported **SJR 16** and would like to see a student representative on the interim committee.

Dick Crofts, Commissioner of Higher Education, said he rose in support of **SJR 16**. He agreed, since the last study had been done in 1989, it was time to conduct another. He was concerned the resolution seemed to point toward a voucher system, but thought there would be ample time to discuss the issue later, should it pass. He was not sure what "exploring practical methods of providing greater participation in policymaking and control of expenditures by communities in which higher education institutions are located" meant. He commented they had worked hard the past five years to ensure there was a strong and unified Montana university system which covered the entire state, and he would hate to see communities and institutions divided against each other. However, all in all, they were happy to see another study of the funding system.

Opponents' Testimony: None.

{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 7.6}

Questions from Committee Members and Responses:

SEN. JACK WELLS asked for expansion on the funding for student scholarships. **SEN. KEN MILLER** said it could go all the way from MTAP, a student scholarship program, to full funding. If taxpayers would, for instance, support college tuition by \$3,000, students would take that \$3,000 and attend the Montana school of choice.

SEN. WELLS asked for an explanation of "control of expenditures by communities". **SEN. MILLER** said communities had things to offer, such as the medical community or taxpayers funding research or erecting a building to start a new program. Another

way would be a private computer corporation and taxpayers funding a program to educate students in computer technology.

Closing by Sponsor:

SEN. KEN MILLER said he would like all facets of the education community included so they could develop strong ideas and bring them to the legislature.

Discussion on HB 584

SEN. DEBBIE SHEA asked if the equitable distribution would be within the jurisdiction of the Office of Public Instruction (OPI). **SEN. BILL GLASER** said currently, the property was distributed through State Property, but was not advertised very well. Therefore, the distribution was spotty.

SEN. MIGNON WATERMAN said the proposal offered by Madalyn Quinlan, OPI, on March 17, 1999, was good because it defined a way to distribute information on the grants, etc., through OPI. She suggested **Eddye McClure** draw up an amendment which would allow for what was outlined in Ms. Quinlan's letter.

SEN. SHEA asked if it would include how the public and schools would be alerted to the availability. **Eddye McClure** said she understood OPI would use the rulemaking process, not statute, to describe how the availability would be advertised and the property distributed.

{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 15.8}

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON SJR 16

Motion/Vote: **SEN. SPRAGUE** moved that SJR 16 DO PASS. Motion carried 9-1 with **SEN. WATERMAN** voting no.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 3:40 P.M.

SEN. DARYL TOEWS, Chairman

JANICE SOFT, Secretary

DT/JS

EXHIBIT (eds64aad)